



June 2013

TCM representatives return to Birdik school

Graduation from high school is a significant event in any adolescent's life.

Representatives from the Transit Center at Manas joined in this special moment for nine students at Birdik Village School. The ceremony was made even more significant by the fact that this was the first class of students to graduate who had completed all four years of secondary education at the school since it was renovated and reopened in 2009.

"It's wonderful to be back at Birdik Village School," said Col. Corey Martin, Transit Center at Manas director. "Congratulations to the students, teachers, administrators and parents on a wonderful year. But most importantly, congratulations to the graduating students who spent the last four years at this beautiful Birdik school."

Birdik Village School was renovated in 2009 as part of a humanitarian assistance project managed by U.S. Air Forces Central Command and the Transit Center. Prior to renovation, the 40-year-old school building had been sitting empty for more than 10 years. The \$678,000 project included renovations of the electrical transformer/generator, coal fire boilers, septic system, sidewalks, perimeter fence, exterior façade and metal roof. Additionally, the project included new paint, windows, interior finishes, fire alarm and security system, as well as \$150,000 worth of furniture and equip-

ment.

The project set a benchmark for humanitarian assistance projects. Since the renovation, representatives of the Transit Center have maintained a partnership with the school, visiting at least once a month to provide English lessons and participate in social events, such as the graduation ceremony, with the students and staff.

"Today is a wonderful day," said Olga Voroshihina, Birdik Village School principal. "I think our school is most happy to celebrate today's events – the end of the school year and graduation – because we had an opportunity to meet with the leadership of the Transit Center and they blessed us with their presence at today's ceremony. I would say our relationship is not only very close since the realization of this project, but I would also say it is very warm. Despite the fact that we might not always see representatives from the Transit Center, their presence is always felt."

The special graduation ceremony included a number of poems, songs and dances performed by graduates of each grade. The youngest students congratulated the oldest students, who in turn provided them advice on succeeding in school. Finally, certificates and academic achievement medals were awarded and it was time to ring the last bell.

"We were very nervous this morning getting ready for today's events," said Elena



Birdik Village School students ceremonially ring the final school bell while members from the Transit Center at Manas watch during the school's graduation in Kyrgyzstan, May 25, 2013. Prior to the renovation four years ago, the school had been vacant for 10 years.

Nikolaebna Meyer, a 16-year-old graduating student. "We thought we would meet the day with great happiness and be overjoyed. In actuality, it was very touching and we were overcome with a little bit of sadness because we realized we would no longer be able to come to this school and study with our teachers anymore. Despite the fact that today, we walked in to this graduation expecting and looking forward to becoming adults and starting the next part of our lives, we're leaving here wishing we were still children and could stay here and study with these teachers a little bit longer."

These same emotions were felt by other graduating students. Sixteen-year-old Galina Alexeyevna Trubnikova described the rollercoaster of emotions she felt during the graduation.

"It is a significant day to-

day, but for the most part, tears gather in my eyes when I stop and think I am not going to be coming to this school anymore," said Trubnikova, who plans to continue her studies and become a pediatrician. "These last four years have been the best of my life."

Before departing the school, students spoke with representatives from the Transit Center one last time.

"I would like to thank you for your help in the renovation of this building, which to me holds a very special place in my heart," Meyer said. "I hope my little brothers and little sisters who will now begin their educational path will experience the same amount of happiness and joy that I experienced and my classmates experienced here."

Local media, mayors explore Transit Center mission

Recently elected local mayors received a first-hand look at the Transit Center at Manas.

The mayors of At-Bashinskiy and Jangi-Jer toured the Transit Center May 21, 2013, where they learned more about the onward movement, airlift, air refueling and community partnership missions.

“We have come here to learn what the Transit Center is,” said Tezekbaev Nasyrdin, mayor of Jangi-Jer State Village Administration.

The mayors met with Transit Center leadership who briefed the TCM mission. They then toured the installation, including stops at the vehicle rollover training facility, and KC-135 Stratotanker and C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. At each stop, the mayors interacted with U.S. service members.

“Only through interaction do we learn about people – how they live, where they work, what they do,” said Aziz Seytaliev, At-Bashinskiy State Village Administration.

As mayor of the village closest to the Transit Center, Seytaliev was interested in learning more about the installation, particularly how the village and Transit Center could work together.

“We Kyrgyz people have a saying – It is better to have good neighbors than a big fence,” Seytaliev said. “We want to be good neighbors.”

Col. Corey Martin, Transit Center director, discussed potential partnership opportunities with the villages and thanked the mayors for all that their villages have already done.

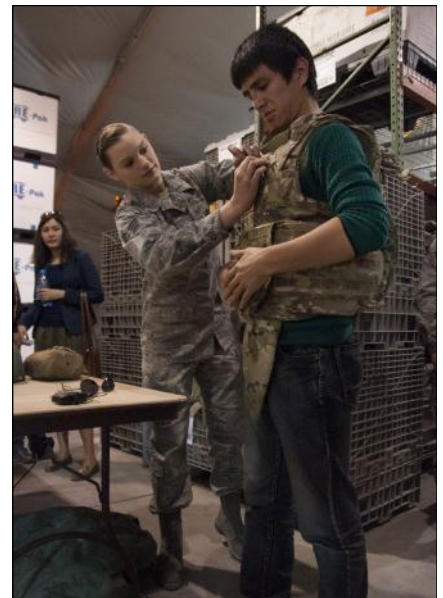
“The U.S. tries to be a good neighbor and help with humanitarian assistance projects and military-to-military exchanges with the Kyrgyz,” Martin said. “Very few Americans get the opportunity to go to Kyrgyzstan. For you to open up opportunities for our Airmen to go into your villages is very beneficial as they learn more about the world. So, thank you.”



The mayors of At-Bashinskiy and Jangi-Jer State Village Administrations tour the inside of a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft with members of the 817th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron during a visit May 21, 2013 at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. The mayors also toured a KC-135 Stratotanker, learning about the air refueling mission.



Above: Col. Robert Mallets, Transit Center vice director, answers reporters' questions about the air refueling mission during a media visit April 30, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. A dozen local media representatives spent the day at the Transit Center getting a first-hand look at the mission and way of life for service members.



Right: Senior Airman Jessica Smith, 376th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, demonstrates how the individual body armor vest works on a local reporter during a media visit April 30, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan.



Marcus Bensmann, a reporter in Central Asia, interviews a service member during a media visit April 30, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. Bensmann and other reporters had the opportunity to interview multiple service members as they prepared to travel home following deployment to Afghanistan.

AFCENT band shares American music

During their recent tour, the U.S. Air Forces Central Command band once again proved that music is a universal language.

Vector, the current AFCENT band, completed a 12-day visit to Kyrgyzstan where they performed for audiences at the Bishkek Humanities University and Kant Secondary School Number One. Additionally, the band met with young musicians from the Ordo Sakhna Folk Ensemble where they were introduced to traditional Kyrgyz music and instruments.

The band is comprised of active duty Airmen deployed from The Air Force Band at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Washington, D.C. Although they come from different musical ensembles at homestation, the band members came together to form Vector, a rock band.

"Every experience was fantastic," said Master Sgt. Matt Murray, the bassist for the band. "The interactions we had with the students at the humanities university, with the students at the secondary school and with the Kyrgyz musicians was so fantastic. Whenever you work with young people and students, there are no biases; they are just very open minded and excited."

For many of the band members, the highlight of their time in Kyrgyzstan was their meeting with Kyrgyz folk musicians. The musicians, ages 15 to 21 years old, had just returned from a performance in Turkey. They played a number of traditional Kyrgyz melodies, western songs, and even an original



Tech. Sgt. David McDonald, U.S. Air Forces Central Command band drummer, attempts to play the mouth harp following a musical performance by the Ordo Sakhna Folk Ensemble May 11, 2013, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The mouth harp was just one of the traditional Kyrgyz instruments the AFCENT band was introduced to during the performance.



Tech. Sgt. Paige Martin, vocalist for the U.S. Air Forces Central Command band, sings to a group of girls at a secondary school May 3, 2013, in Kant, Kyrgyzstan. Throughout the band's performance, Martin encouraged the audience to sing and dance along.

composition.

"They were fantastic musicians; pretty inspiring for many reasons," said Murray. "Just because we've been playing one style of music with a finite repertoire of songs, it was so refreshing to hear something so different. They were incredibly young and so talented. And so versatile too; they could all play all the instruments – the strings, percussion, woodwinds. They were really virtuosic on the komuz [fretless string instrument] too."

Following the Kyrgyz musicians performance, members of Vector performed a few songs in return. At one point, a few of the band members sat down and performed an acoustic version of the Beatles' "Let It Be."

"This kid almost started jumping up and down, he was so excited because he loved that tune," said Tech. Sgt. Paige Martin, vocalist for Vector. "He sat down and sang it with us. I think at one point I just leaned my head over, rested it on his head and we just sang together for a while. It was a very, very touching moment. It really shows you the power of music and how it really brings people together. That's what we're out here to do."

Kyrgyzstan was the last tour in the

band's deployment. Based in Southwest Asia, the band traveled to more than five countries in their 90-day deployment.

"It's pretty amazing to get to Afghanistan or Kyrgyzstan or any of the countries we've been to in the Saudi peninsula," said Murray. "It's one thing to know what the Air Force or U.S. military is doing in the Central Command region. It's another thing to have actually been there – To actually be present, feel the sun, shake hands with people, listen to the language, and hear Kyrgyz instruments. It's been an amazing opportunity to see the world in a way that we wouldn't get to otherwise."

Just as it was for Murray, the deployment was a rewarding experience for others in the band.

"When we first started [our deployment], it was very, very surreal," said Martin. "I always feel like I'm part of something larger than myself when I'm in the States, but it's been really, really heavy out here. We're out here to entertain troops and to go into the public and build bridges. I think we brought a lot of joy to a lot of folks and we've done our job."

Kyrgyz, US military exchange EOD knowledge



U.S. Armed Forces and Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Defense explosive ordnance disposal team members, work together to practice uncovering landmines during an EOD military exchange April 24, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. "We are developing a partnership with our host national counterparts," said Sgt. 1st Class James Garton, EOD Theater Security Cooperation event manager. "It's always a win when people can get together because we have so much to learn from one another."



A 57mm training rocket sticks out of the ground during an EOD military exchange April 24, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. The rocket was used to demonstrate proper removal techniques during an exchange between U.S. Armed Forces and Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Defense.

Top: Kyrgyz Republic explosive ordnance disposal team members control a bomb disposal robot during an EOD military exchange April 24, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan.



Bottom: Airmen from the 376th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordnance disposal team, assemble a hook and line kit during an EOD military exchange April 24, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. EOD Airmen use the kit to remove objects from areas where explosives could be located.



Senior Airman Kyle Osgood, 376th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordnance disposal team member, and Sgt. Ulanbek Jidebaev, Ministry of Defense explosive ordnance disposal team member, uncover a training landmine during an EOD military exchange April 24, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. "I was able to assist in demonstrating our tools and equipment to our Kyrgyz counterparts," said Osgood. I've really enjoyed this experience; it's my first time working with a foreign military. The language barrier could have presented some difficulty but we are lucky to have such great interpreters."

TCM helps provide American Corners

Each week, volunteers from the Transit Center at Manas help bring a little corner of America to the Kyrgyz people.

The Transit Center's Theater Security Cooperation social cultural branch is responsible for hosting English language clubs at libraries in Bishkek and Kant as part of the American Corner.

American Corner, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, is an American-styled information resource center providing comprehensive and up-to-date information about the United States, and thus promoting mutual understanding between the American and Kyrgyz people.

At the Bayalinov National Library of Kyrgyzstan, the social cultural branch hosts two weekly talking clubs. They also host a monthly talking club at the Chui Oblast Library in Kant. Each time, they take volunteers from the Transit Center to engage the participants in conversation on that day's topic.

"Each week we go over a different topic and share American ideas through the language exchange," said Staff Sgt. Robert McGonagle, NCO in charge of TSC's social cultural branch. "It's an opportunity to see a different culture with different views and beliefs about the



Staff Sgt. Robert McGonagle, 376th Air Expeditionary Wing Theater Security Cooperation Division NCO in charge of social cultural branch, leads a discussion on social media at the Bayalinov National Library of Kyrgyzstan May 17, 2013, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Service members from the Transit Center at Manas visit the library twice a week to participate in English talking clubs as part of American Corner.

American way of life, all while promoting English language conversation skills."

A typical talking club has anywhere between 20 and 40 Kyrgyz participants, mainly high school and college students. Meerim Suiundukova is a 23-year old student finishing her final year in university. She has been attending the

American Corner talking clubs regularly for the past four months.

"I come to practice my English and learn more about American culture and compare it to our culture," Suiundukova said. "I try to come every time. There are a lot of interesting topics. It's helpful because I get to practice more; I learn new words. If I don't know, I ask and they explain it to me."

Suiundukova studied English in high school and has taken additional English courses, but the opportunity to practice the language with native speakers has been a huge benefit, she said. While Kyrgyz participants may gain the opportunity to improving language skills, there are many more benefits to the program for both Kyrgyz and American participants alike.

"We want to learn about their culture," said McGonagle. "We want them to learn about us. I think we all walk away with a better understanding of each other. It's an eye-opening experience and one many people don't normally get. I encourage everyone to participate; it's an amazing experience you will never forget and the chance to build new friendships."

TCM, local university bond through basketball



Above: Coach Alexander Svetovoi instructs the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University basketball team during a varsity basketball game versus the Transit Center's men's basketball team in the fitness center at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, May 18, 2013. The TCM team won against the Kyrgyzstan team 84 to 72. This is the first time this team has played against the TCM men's team.

Left: The Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University basketball team and Transit Center at Manas men's team players compete for the ball during a varsity basketball game at the fitness center at the Transit Center, Kyrgyzstan, May 18, 2013.

Transit Center Economic Impact as of May 31, 2013

Direct Expenditures	FY09 Actual	FY10 Actual	FY11 Actual	FY12 YTD	FY13 YTD
Payments to Kyrgyz Govt - Dip Note	\$26,620,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$60,000,000	\$45,000,000
Payments to Manas International Airport	\$22,999,039				
Lease, Passes, Utilities		\$4,029,091	\$7,817,140	\$4,475,365	\$4,437,693
Aircraft Landing, Parking, Service Fees		\$21,157,571	\$19,460,590	\$21,301,884	\$10,198,190
Contributions to Airport Improvements	\$30,600,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,658,294	\$108,049
Contributions to Kyrgyz Aeronavigation	\$0	\$0	\$30,000,000	\$60,505	\$58,800
Contract Payments (Furniture, Sports Equipment, Parts, Supplies, Buildings, Renovations, Road Repairs, Grounds Maintenance, Refuse, Custodial, Vehicle Leases)	\$24,601,908	\$42,790,517	\$30,916,871	\$31,567,612	\$16,070,695
Leases (non-MIA)	\$81,562	\$66,596	\$120,698	\$132,687	\$75,600
Programmatic Humanitarian Assistance	\$1,700,000	\$2,273,488	\$823,634	\$1,887,684	\$197,636
Subtotal Direct Expenditures	\$106,602,509	\$130,317,263	\$149,138,933	\$140,084,031	\$76,146,663
Indirect Expenditures					
Estimated U.S. military local spending	\$1,037,530	\$1,161,743	\$1,427,396	\$2,011,226	\$1,853,790
Subtotal Indirect Expenditures	\$1,037,530	\$1,161,743	\$1,427,396	\$2,011,226	\$1,853,790
Total Economic Impact	\$107,640,039	\$131,479,006	\$150,566,329	\$142,095,257	\$78,000,453
DLA Jet Fuel Payments (GAK)				\$208,137,115	\$116,747,215

Transit Center visit encourages young Kyrgyz athletes



Top: Young Kyrgyz soccer players and administrators from the Football Federation of Kyrgyz Republic gather inside a C-17 Globemaster III and listen as women aircrew members describe the aircraft's capabilities during a tour April 11, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. The tour showcased women in leadership and non-traditional roles in an effort to inspire the girls in following their dreams.

Right: Airmen practice passing skills with a group of Kyrgyz girls April 11, 2013, at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan. The girls visited the Transit Center for a tour and exposure to America-style soccer skills.

